



STANDARDS AND CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT

Excerpt from 2010 Country Commercial Guide

Doing Business in Vietnam: 2010 Country Commercial Guide for U.S. Companies

Overview

Vietnam's standards system currently consists of over 6,000 national standards (TCVN—based on the Vietnamese language). The first TCVN was developed in 1963. The Directorate for Standards, Metrology and Quality (STAMEQ) of the Ministry of Science and Technology is Vietnam's national standards body. Vietnam's weights and measures standards are based on the Metric system. The electric current is AC 50-60 Hz and voltage ranges are 220/380 volts. The electric distribution system of Vietnam is being standardized at three phase, four wires. The Law on Standards and Technical Regulations was adopted by the National Assembly in June 2006 and took effect on January 1, 2007. This law marked a turning point for standardization activities in Vietnam and comprehensively reformed the system.

Under this law, standards and technical regulations are simplified to three levels: national standards (TCVNs) and organization's standards (TCCSs), national technical regulations (QCVNs) and local technical regulations (QCDPs). While standards are applied voluntarily, technical regulations are mandatory. The Law also clearly identified the Ministry of Science and Technology as the responsible agency for issuing and managing national standards, while line ministries are responsible for developing national technical regulations.

Following accession to the WTO, Vietnam's Directorate for Standards, Metrology and Quality (STAMEQ) became the central inquiry and notification point under the WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade.

Still, Vietnam's system of standards is complicated and not always transparent. Some items are subject to national standards, some are subject to regulations of the functioning agencies and some are subject to both. Thirty eight percent of Vietnam's standards are harmonized with international and regional standards, and the country is a member of 18 international organizations that regulate standards. In general, Vietnam does not appear to use technical measures to serve as non-tariff barriers. The exceptions to this are some goods controlled by specific ministries such as chemicals, toxic chemicals and intermediate materials for their production, wild animals, pesticides and materials for their production, pharmaceuticals, substances that may cause addiction, cosmetics that may impact human health and medical equipment.

Standards Organizations

The Directorate for Standards, Metrology and Quality of Vietnam (STAMEQ), under the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST), is the national standardization agency. STAMEQ is

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responsible for advising the Government on issues in the fields of standardization, metrology and quality management domestically, as well as representing Vietnam in international and regional organizations in the fields concerned. This organization also has the following responsibilities:

- Prepare rules and regulations on standardization, metrology and quality management and submit them to appropriate authorities for approval.
- Organize the supervision and implementation of approved rules and regulations.
- Establish an organizational system on standardization, metrology and quality management and provide methodological guidance for these activities.
- Organize the formulation of national standards and maintain national metrology standards. Develop policies and management documents on conformance activities: accreditation; certification, testing and inspection
- Provide product quality and system certification.
- Implement state supervision on quality of goods and measurement.
- Conduct studies on standardization, metrology and quality management.
- Carry out informational and training activities related to standardization, metrology and quality management.

STAMEQ now participates as a member in 18 international and regional standards organizations, including ISO, IEC, ITU-T, Codex, PASC, ILAC, OIML, APLAC, APMP, and APLMF.

For more information, see <http://www.tcvn.gov.vn>

According to the Law on Standards and Technical Regulation, Government Decree 127/2007/ND-CP dated 1/8/2007 and Ministerial Circular No 21/2007/TTBKHCN dated 28/9/2007, the procedures for national standards development were stipulated in accordance with the principles of the WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBTs). For example, draft national standards are to be prepared by relevant line ministries, national standards technical committees and other organizations. In turn, drafts are to be circulated for public comments for at least 60 days, passed onto the standards appraisal committee, and then submitted by STAMEQ to the Minister of the Ministry of Science and Technology for approval and issuance.

About 38 percent of Vietnam's national standards system has been developed by way of adoption of relevant international and regional standards (e.g. ISO, IEC, Codex). The process of national standards development is supposed to be transparent to the public, from the incipient stages of development up until the standard is issued and published. According to the Law on Standards and Technical Regulations and the Government Decree No. 127/2007/ND-CP, and the Government Decree No. 67/2009/ND-CP dated 3 August 2009, existing mandatory standards should be reviewed for appropriate conversion into technical regulations or withdrawn

by December 2011.
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STAMEQ's Standards Department is responsible for the management of standardization activities in Vietnam, including: preparing, guiding and monitoring the implementation of legislative documents on standardization; suggesting the policy and strategy for standardization and national standards system development; standards development planning; organizing the draft national standards appraisal; and submitting final draft standards to the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) for adoption. STAMEQ's Standards Department is engaged in international and regional standardization organization activities.

The Vietnam Standards and Quality Institute (VSQI) is a subsidiary of STAMEQ that is responsible for organizing national technical committee activities; developing and printing national standards, and providing other related services. It has established relationships with relevant domestic ministries/agencies, as well as international and national standardization organizations. For more information see <http://www.vsqi.gov.vn/en>

National standards (TCVNs) are developed on the basis of research, the application of scientific and technological advances, and the adoption of international, regional standards. TCVNs are developed by consensus, with participation of different interested parties and stakeholders. They are used as the technical criteria for quality certification, suppliers' product conformity declarations, and quality inspection of imported and exported goods. TCVNs are developed through technical committees and ministries with the involvement of any interested parties and are intended for voluntary adoption unless they were referenced in other laws and regulations as mandatory. Any public or private organization or individual is bound to observe mandatory standards. The State encourages the application of voluntary standards.

The National Assembly adopted the Law on Goods and Product Quality in November 2007, taking effect on July 1, 2008. In line with the law, the Government issued Decree 132/2008/ ND-CP on 31 December 2008. As of this writing, the Law on Metrology is in draft form and is scheduled to be ratified by the National Assembly in 2011. On March 25, 2003, Vietnam's TBT Enquiry and Notification point of contact was formally established within the offices of STAMEQ. For more information see <http://www.tbvtvn.org>.

Conformity Assessment

Technical organizations under STAMEQ and provincial Standards, Metrology and Quality Departments providing the following services:

- Legal inspection of imported - exported goods.
- Verification for process line equipment.
- Calibration and verification of measuring equipment.

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- Testing and inspection of products and commodity.
- Products and systems certification.
- Consultancy, training services.
- Information services.

For more information on conformity assessment in Vietnam, see the following websites:

www.quatest1.com.vn

<http://www.quatest3.com.vn/>

<http://www.quacert.gov.vn/>

www.vmi.gov.vn

www.tcvninfo.org.vn

Product Certification

Under STAMEQ, there are 4 product certification bodies: QUATEST1, QUATEST2, QUATEST3 and QUACERT (The Vietnam Certification Centre).

QUACERT is the Certification Body of STAMEQ. QUACERT provides certification services for organizations and individuals who have complied with internationally recognized standards or other technical specifications including:

Management system certification to international standards: ISO 9001, ISO 14001, OHSAS 18001, ISO 22000, HACCP, GMP, ISO 27001, ISO/TS 29001

Product certification to Vietnam standards (TCVNs), foreign standards (ASTM, JIS, DIN, GOST, GB), regional standards (EN, CEN) and International standards (ISO, IEC).

Certification of Electrical – Electronic equipment under ASEAN EE MRA.

Product certification to Technical Regulations under the Vietnam Law of Standards and Technical Regulations.

Certification of VietGAP (Vietnam's Good Agriculture Practices regulation established by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development).

Provision of business management solutions in applying information technology.

For more information, please see: <http://www.quacert.gov.vn>

Accreditation

The Bureau of Accreditation (BoA) was established in 1995 under STAMEQ. The BoA consists of three accreditation programs: namely, Vietnam Certification Accreditation Scheme (VICAS), Vietnam Laboratory Accreditation Scheme (VILAS), and Vietnam Inspection Accreditation Scheme (VIAS).

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The BOA operates the Vietnam Laboratory Accreditation Scheme (VILAS). VILAS is a voluntary scheme, open to any laboratory that performs objective testing/calibration falling within the scheme and meeting the VILAS criteria of competence. The aims of VILAS are to:

- Upgrade the standard of testing and management of laboratories
- Identify and officially recognize competent laboratories in Vietnam
- Promote the acceptance of test data from accredited laboratories, both locally and internationally
- Integrate accreditation activities with those of other regional and international accreditation schemes
- VILAS acts as a contact point for APLAC's inter-laboratory comparisons and proficiency testing. VILAS also offers a variety of training courses for laboratory management, laboratory personnel and assessors.
- STAMEQ seeks to keep BoA abreast of the latest international developments in accreditation by guiding BoA to participate in the activities of ILAC (International Laboratory Accreditation Conference), APLAC (Asia Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation), PAC (Pacific Accreditation Cooperation) and ACCSQ, WG2 (ASEAN Consultative Committee on Standards and Quality- Working Group 2).

As from January 2010, BoA has been separated from STAMEQ and became an organization directly under the Ministry of Science and Technology according to the Decision number 1101/QD-TTg dated 23/7/2009 of the Prime Minister on the professional organizations under the Ministry of Science and Technology.

For more information, please visit <http://www.boa.gov.vn/>

Publication of Technical Regulations

Cong Bao is the official gazette of the Vietnamese Government, similar to the U.S. Federal Register. Technical regulations and standards are printed in the gazette, which is issued in both Vietnamese and English.

Labeling and Marking

For standards affecting product labeling, see the Labeling and Marking section presented earlier in Chapter Five.

Contacts

For more information about standards in Vietnam, please contact:
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